

CLAIMS:

1. An apparatus for dispensing a cover device, the cover device comprising a frame and a membrane, the cover device being actuatable from a first state, in which an outer portion of the membrane is seated on an outer surface of the frame such that the frame holds the membrane in a generally deployed state, and a second state in which the outer portion of the membrane is located generally inwardly of its seated position, the apparatus comprising: a magazine for storing at least one cover device in said first state, the magazine having a mouth through which the at least one cover device may be dispensed; and means for actuating the at least one stored cover device from the first state to the second state.
2. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 1, wherein said actuating means actuates the at least one stored cover device from the first state to the second state upon movement of said at least one stored cover device into the magazine.
3. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 1 or 2, further including an actuating mechanism arranged to urge the at least one cover device towards the mouth.
4. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 3, wherein said actuating mechanism comprises a platform mounted on a spring, the spring being biased to urge the platform towards the mouth.
5. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein a retaining lip is provided around at least part of the mouth, the retaining lip extending inwardly of the mouth.
6. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 5, wherein the retaining lip is dimensioned to engage with, during use, the outer portion of the cover device nearest the mouth when in said first state, thereby retaining said cover device in the apparatus, and to

allow said cover device to be removed from the apparatus when in the second state.

7. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said actuating means
5 comprises means for dislodging the outer portion of the membrane from its seat on
the frame.

8. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 7, wherein said dislodging means is
actuatable between a dislodging state and a deflected state.

10 9. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein said dislodging means is
actuatable from said dislodging state to said deflected state by passage of a cover
device moving towards said mouth.

15 10. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 8 or 9, wherein said dislodging means is
biased to adopt the dislodging state.

11. An apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 7 to 10, wherein said
dislodging means comprises at least one projection extending away from an
20 interior surface of the magazine and being spaced-apart from the mouth

12. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, wherein the spacing between the at least
one projection and the mouth is such as to accommodate, during use, a single
cover device between the at least one projection and the mouth.

25 13. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 11 or 12, wherein said at least one
projection extends obliquely from the interior surface of the magazine in a
direction generally towards the mouth.

14. An apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 11 to 13, wherein at least a part of said projections are formed from a flexible, resilient material.
15. An apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 11 to 14, wherein said at least one projection is carried by a ring, the ring being seated on a shoulder formed at the interior surface of the magazine.
16. An apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 7 to 15, wherein said dislodging means is spaced-apart from the mouth, the spacing being such as to accommodate, during use, a single cover device between the dislodging means and the mouth.
17. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, the apparatus containing at least one of said cover devices.
18. An apparatus as claimed in any preceding claim, further comprising a collar, the magazine being movable with respect to the collar in a first direction, and wherein the collar carries said actuating means, said actuating means actuating the at least one stored cover device from the first state to the second state upon movement of said magazine in said first direction.
19. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 18, wherein resilient biasing means are provided between said collar and said magazine, the resilient biasing means being arranged to urge said magazine in a second direction, said second direction being generally opposite to said first direction.
20. An apparatus as claimed in Claim 18 or 19, wherein said collar is located at least partially around the external periphery of the magazine.
21. A cover device comprising a frame and a membrane, the cover device being actuatable from a first state, in which an outer portion of the membrane is seated

on an outer surface of the frame such that the frame holds the membrane in a generally deployed state, and a second state in which the outer portion of the membrane is located generally inwardly of its seated position.

- 5 22. A cover device as claimed in Claim 21, wherein the outer portion of the membrane comprises a peripheral ring.
- 10 23. A cover device as claimed in Claim 21 or 22, wherein the outer surface of the frame is concave in transverse cross-sectional profile to define a seat for the outer portion of the membrane.
- 15 24. A cover device as claimed in any one of Claims 21 to 23, wherein at least the outer portion of the membrane is formed from elastic material.
- 20 25. A cover device as claimed in Claim 24, wherein, in the first state, said outer portion is stretched by the frame such that the membrane is self-retaining on the frame.
26. A cover device as claimed in Claim 25, wherein, in the second state, said outer portion is contracted with respect to the first state and is located generally inwardly of the frame.